ΚΡΥΠΤΕΤΧΟΛΟΓΙΑ:

Or, A Plain

ANSWER

To this

Practical Question,

What course may a Christian take to have his Heart quickned and enlarged in the Duty of Secret Prayer?

By RICHARD MAYO.
late of *Kingston* upon *Thames*.

Psalm 80. 18. *Quicken us, O Lord, and we will call upon thy Name.*

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To the Reader.

Reader,

I Was the more willing to print this Letter (though penn'd at first for the closet of a particular friend, and not in a fit dress to come abroad) because it contains an Answer to a Question that every Christian is ready to ask, and none (so far as I can learn) did ever yet undertake to resolve; or if any have obliquely touched it, never any did directly handle it.

A small Structure must not have a great Porch: I shall onely suggest these two preliminary Exhortations.

1. *Be much in the duty of secret Prayer; be as constant at it as at your* [a] *meals. Amongst many motives, this is one, 'Tis a Duty wherein God doth ordinarily make the greatest discoveries of himself. Joseph and his brethren were alone when he made himself known to them. The secrets of the Lord are usually revealed unto his people when they are seeking him in secret; then 'tis that he gives them his* [b] *loves, when*

[a] Morning, evening, and noon-daye So *David*. *Joachim* the father of the Virgin *Mary* used to say, That Prayer was his meat and drink. See *Daniels* practice, *Dan.* 6. 10.

[b] *O anima sancta sola esto, nec scis utrum secundum te habere sponsum.*

they fall down upon their knees unto him, he falls upon their necks and kisseth them. [c] *They are never less alone then when alone.*

[c] *Nunquam minùs solus, quam cum solus.*

2. *Be warm and lively in the Duty. A dead Prayer is no more accepted with God, then of old the offering up of a beast that was found dead in a ditch. The Ass under the Law was not to be offered unto God, but his neck must be broke; not that God was angry with that creature which was the workmanship of his hands, but to shew how distastfull a dull and a dead heart is to him in his service. Sometimes Christians goe to Prayer as sick persons to their meals, because they must eat, and 'tis dinner-time, and the like; not that they desire or delight in their food, or find any refreshment thereby. If it be thus with thee in reference to Prayer, thou art greatly distempered, thy condition is very dangerous, therefore look out speedily for help. May this following Letter contribute something thereunto: the Lord set in with it for that end.*

A Plain

ANSWER

To this

Practical Question,

What course may a Christian take to have his heart quickned and enlarged in the Duty of Secret Prayer?

Christian Friend,

YOur Question savours of a Spirit truly gracious. It supposeth you already convinced of, and perswaded to the practice of that necessary, though neglected, Duty of Secret Prayer. It shews you do not take up with a bare performance of Duty, as too many do, not caring how or in what manner it be performed. It argues you would present God with the *male of your flock*, and not put him off

with a corrupt thing. These are good signs of sincerity.

I could heartily wish that all Christians would follow your example, to propose such profitable questions as may promote piety, and to avoid *such* [a] *foolish questions as do engender strifes.*

[a] 2 Tim. 2. 23.

I would not be wanting to you in so pious a request, as this is: And oh that I could say, that [b] *What I here declare unto you I have seen and felt my self*; that what is here expresst, is the same which I my self have experienc'd.

[b] 1 Joh. 1. 3.

It is besides your desire and my design to write concerning the duty of secret Prayer at large; to open the nature of it, to shew the necessity of it, to lay down Arguments to move you to it, to advise in what manner you should manage it, namely, with faith, with fervency, with humility, with sincerity, with constancy, with watchfulness, in the Spirit, and the like: this work is done to my hand in many Treatises, and those extant, some of them, [c] in our own Language. I shall therefore strictly keep to the Question propounded, which I acknowledge is of greatest concernment. God is a living God, and they

[c] *Cobbet* his practical discourse of Prayer. *Philip Goodwin* his Family Religion revived. from *pag.* 149. to *p.* 215.

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they that worship him must worship him with warmth and [d] life; such suppliants he seeketh after.

[d] *Ejusmodi cultum Probat Deus qui ejus naturæ congruit. Cal. in Joh. 4. 23.*

Meet helps then in this case are such as follow,

1. Remember to observe the fittest seasons for the performance of this duty. Though a Christian is to pray at all times, yet at all times he is not alike fit for Prayer. This you find by experience: As many a fair Child is lost by an untimely birth, so many a good duty is marr'd by an undue timing of it.

Of many apt seasons, I shall mention these three.

1. When you meet with any new occurrence of Providence. Every fresh dispensation of Providence is a provocation unto Prayer. When any affliction befals thee, then fall down before God, and humble thy self under his afflicting hand. [e] *Is any amongst you afflicted? let him pray*, says the Apostle; that is, let him then do it more especially, then there is a fit opportunity for it.

[e] Jam. 5. 13 *Præsentium curandum est quoties aliquâ re-*

rum angustia, aut ipsi premimur, aut premi alios videmus, ut ad Deum citatis, non pedibus, sed animis recurramus. Deinde, ne quam aut nostram aut aliorum prosperitatem præterire sinamus; quin laude, ac gratiarum actione, manum ejus agnoscere nos testemur. Cal. Instit. lib. 3.

Again, when any fresh mercy is conferred upon thee, then it is a fit season to go aside and to acknowledge thine unworthiness, and to express thy thankfulness. See an excellent instance for this in 2 *Sam.*7.18. the words are these, Then went King *David* in, and sat before the Lord, and said, *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Mark that particle, *then.* Why when was it? See the foregoing Verse, When God by *Nathan* had made many promises, and that of great mercies to him, then he went in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I? *&c.*

The Reader may dilate his thoughts upon this, and the following particulars: I intend onely brief hints.

2. When you find the Spirit of God moving upon your Soul, and exciting you to the duty; then it is a fit season for it: Now God calls upon you to come and converse with him, he invites you now to communion with himself. Think at such a time, that the Lord bespeaks you in such a manner as he doth the Spouse, *Cant.*2.10. *Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Or

Or as 'tis Verſ. 14. *Come, let me hear thy voice, for it is ſweet.* To pray at ſuch a ſeaſon is to hoiſe up ſail before the wind; it is like rowing both with wind and tide. Being thus excited by the Spirit, you may expect the aſſiſtance of it: if Prayer be now neglected, the Spirit of God is quenched; and I'le pronounce him a novice in Religion, or rather a ſtranger to it altogether, that doth not confeſs it neceſſary to the lively performance of this Duty, that the Spirit of God doth act and quicken him therein. Our motions are exceeding dull and heavy in holy Duties, when the Spirit of God *doth not help our infirmities.* Whenſoever therefore God ſays by the ſecret whiſperings of his Spirit, [f] *Seek ye my face*, our hearts ſhould anſwer and eccho back as *Davids* did, *Thy face, O Lord, we will ſeek.*

[f] Pſ. 27. 6.

Yet here I would have it remembred, I do not ſay a Chriſtian ſhould never pray, but when he finds the Spirit of God egging him forward; this hath been the groſs miſtake of ſome, who hereupon have diſcontinued the duty for ſeveral days together, becauſe they have not perceived the Spirit mo-

ving them thereunto: No; let this be thy practice, to wait upon God in his way, and it may be the Spirit of God will meet thee therein. Know this, though the Spirit of God should not put forth his hand to lead thee, yet the Word of God holds forth a precept to command thee, and set thou about the Duty out of pure obedience to the command of God. It may be ere thou art aware, *thou wilt find Him whom thy soul desires.* Though the Spirits assistance be never unwelcome to a Child of God, yet many times it comes unexpected. *Abraham* saw not the Ram for the sacrifice till he was in the Mount: Often in the Mount in the time of Prayer, the Spirit of the Lord is seen and felt. Mariners have put forth to sea in a calm, when they have made but little way, and anon they have met with fresh and unexpected gales of wind, that have brought them with full sail to their desired haven. I leave you to apply it.

Again, I do not deny but the evil spirit who is Gods Ape, may sometimes transform himself into the likeness of Gods Spirit, and may excite a Christian

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to this duty: but then his motions are irregular, and unseasonable; they tend to the hindering of him from another, and (for that time) a more seasonable duty; suppose it a work of mercy to himself, or others, or such like. Christian exercises must be wisely subordinated one to another; whereas the Devil desires to make them interfere, and to set them at variance.

3. When we find our hearts in a setled and composed frame, then also it is a fit season for secret Prayer, when (as *David's*) *our hearts are fixt*, and not pre-occupied with any secular matters. To pray at another time is like playing upon an Instrument that is out of tune; what harsh and unpleasing melody doth it make? Many when they go to seek God, they have their heart to seek. Few can say with *David* that [h] *they have found their hearts to pray.* We render it *he found in his heart*, but it may be read, *he found his heart* to pray a prayer unto God.

[i] Usually in the morning the mind is addresse themselves in the morning early to *vid. Herod. l.* 10. The Primitive Christians were be early at their devotions. *Vid. Pl. ep.* 97. *ad Trajan. Tertul. Apol. c.* 2. See Christs practice *Marc.* 1. 35. *Qui mane surgit precandi causa dicit manicare Deum. Drus.*

[g] Ps. 57. 7.

[h] 2 Sam. 7. 27. In the Hebrew tis onely, *He found to pray.*

[i] It was the custome of the Heathens to their Idols wont to

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most composed; then a man meets with least diversions in duty; the evenings repose hath in great part discharged the mind of all that did distract it: and it were well if we would be with God as soon as we awake: if we did offer up to him the first-fruits of every day; if as soon as we lift our bodies off our beds, we did in Prayer lift up our souls to God. This was *Davids* manner, *Psal.* 5. 3.

Under this Head I will suggest these three cautionary Rules.

1. Do not take Prayer in hand when you have any other matter in hand: if so, you *attendance upon God* must needs be *with distraction*, and your heart will be stollen from you do what you can. Set by all worldly occasions when you set about this duty: say to them as [h]Gen. 22 5 [h] *Abraham* did to his young men, *Stay you here while I go aside to worship God.*

2. Do not ordinarily go to prayer when your anger is stirred, and your mind full of perturbations; if you do, tis ten to one but you will offer up the *sacrifice of a fool*, and *speak unadvisedly with your lips.* The [i] Apostles advice [i] 1 Tim. 2. 8. is, that *we lift up to God holy hands without*

without wrath. [m] *God was not in the Wind, nor in the Earthquake, nor in the fire that passed by Elijah, but in the still small voice.* And you must be of still and quiet spirits, if you will see, or find him. [m] 1 King. 19. 11. 12.

3. Do not usually engage in Prayer when you are enclin'd to sleep & drowsinesse; if so, you are like to make but dull and drowsie work of it. [n] The rebukes of Christ could not awaken his Disciples to Prayer when there hearts *were heavy and asleep.* You must be wakefull when you pray, if you would *watch unto Prayer.* [n] Mar. 26. 40. 41.

2. A second Help is this. Allot and set out a due proportion of time for this Duty. It is not enough to choose a fit time for Prayer, but you must allow sufficient time to Prayer. No service whether secular, or spiritual can be done well, unless you allow a due proportion of time for the doing of it. How is Prayer huddled and slubbered over many times, for want of this? you think of making an end as soon as you begin, you are straightned in your prayers, because you are straightned in your time.

Qu. If you should ask, How much time

time must a Christian set apart in a day for secret Prayer?

Ans. In my answer, I must have respect to the callings, and conditions of Christians; that time is sufficient for one, which is not sufficient for another. 'Tis observable that under the Law there were different sacrifices for the rich, and for the poor: God required that mens sacrifices, should hold some proportion with their abilities. And by parity of reason, God looks that the rich, and those that have little else to doe, should double the time of the poor in Prayer, and of those whose callings call for their continuall attendance.

And yet I must add this too, let a mans condition be never so mean, and let his imployment be never so urgent, it it will not be a sufficient Apology for his neglecting, or curtailing the duty of Prayer. ° *Time must be redeem'd*, and that for this very end, to hold communion with God in this Duty.

° Col. 4. 2. comp. with 5.

This premised I come to the Question, wherein I may not be positive, that would be an unwarrantable presumption. I have often thought that one hour in four and twenty, is as little as any

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any one can ſet apart for ſecret Prayer.

P And if this ſhould ſeem to any a hard ſaying, I deſire they would conſider, whether they don't ſpend two every day about things leſſe neceſſary. Let them caſt up the time they caſt away (more then they need) in ſleeping, eating, and drinking; then let them add thereunto the time they ſpend in ſports, or recreations, in idle viſits, in unprofitable ſtudies or muſings, and in empty chat, or conference with friends, and neighbours; and ſee if the product will not be ſo much or more: and will any that *name the name of Chriſt*, grudge an hour in a day for Prayer, when they can ſpend two, or it may be, more in the meer pleaſing of the fleſh? is this conſiſtent with Chriſtianity? Won't ſuch be filled with horror (as many q others for the ſame reaſon have been) at the hour of death? Can they anſwer it at

p *Luther* ſpent 3 hours in Prayer every day. ſee *Vitus Theod. in vita ejus.* Judge *Coot* adviſed to 4 in a day *Sex horas ſomno, totidem deſ gibus æquis; quatuor orabis, deſ Epuliſque duas.* *Quod ſupereſt ſacris ultro largire camœnis.* K. *Alfred* divided every day into three parts; he allowed eight hours to his devotion, eight to his employment, and eight to his ſleep and refection. q One dreadfully ſhrieckt out on her death-bed theſe words, A world of wealth for an inch of time. Another when friends comforted her as ſhe lay a dying, ſaid, Call time again; no comfort unleſſe you can call time again. *Chryſorius* prayed, *Induciæ Domine uſque ad manè.*

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that day when God will reckon with them for every talent he hath entrusted them with, and for that of time in particular?

If this letter should fall into the hands of any person, who hath resolved, or doth resolve to redeem an hour, or more every day for secret Prayer; let him consider, whether it would not help to quicken and enlarge his heart, if he did morning, or evening, or when he finds himself best disposed thereto, enter into his Closet and turn up an hour-glasse and purpose within himself, to see the last sand run out, before he gave out or left Praying. I do not propose this as an every days practise, but at some certain seasons only. It hath I confesse its inconveniences, but withall, it hath its advantages: hereby the heart is engaged more firmely to the worke. Now it will not put by the present opportunity by propounding another. If thy heart be as mine, it is apt to say to thee when at Prayer, as *Felix* said to *Paul*, Goe thy way for this time, and come again at a more convenient season. And further, thou wilt fall to the duty with the more fervency; for thus thou

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thou wilt reason with thy selfe, So much time I am resolved to spend in this service, and I were better spend it in wrestling with God, then in trifling with God and with Prayer: I were better doe the businesse in hand with all my might, and stir up my selfe to call upon God, for during such a space of time I resolve to do nothing else.

I know tis the opinion of [r] many, that, as some persons do by their meales, they eat little and often, so Christians should do by their Prayers. And in case of great indisposition I judge it advisable; when they have toiled a while, and can catch nothing they may take up their nets, and mend them against another season, and yet I will not discommend such a one that resolves he will catch something or he will toile all night; rhat purposeth in his heart (as [s] one once did) that he will not go from God without God.

[r] *Dicuntur fratres in Egypto crebras orationes habere & eas brevissimas, ne illa vigilantia erecta, quæ orantis plurimum necessaria est, per productiores moras evanescat, atque hebetetur intentio. Auz. ad Prob. Cassian* makes mention of some in his time, *qui utilius censebant, breves quidem orationes, sed crebberrimas, fieri.* [s] *Nunquam abs te absque te discedam. Paulus Æmilius*, being to fight with the Macedonians, would never give over sacrificing to his God *Hercules*, till he had some signe of Victory.

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3 Another Help to this Duty is, to take pains with your heart before-hand, to prepare it thereunto, 'tis usually from the neglect of preparation, that we find such deadnesse and indisposition in secret Prayer. Alas the heart is not all on a sudden lifted up into heaven, many times the Prayer is almost ended, before we begin to pray. There is no Religious Duty but it must have some prævious preparation: this is evident both by the light of [t] Scripture, and of [u] Nature, but Prayer requires it in a more especial manner: see how those two, Preparation, and Prayer, are conjoyned *Job.* 11. 13.

[t] *Ps.* 26. 6. *Exod.* 19. 10. 11. 12. The Books of *Levit.* and *Num.* are full of Scriptures to the same purpose.

[u] *Tu Genitor cape sacra manu patriosque penates; me bello e tanto digressum, & cæde recenti, attractare nefas, donec me flumine vivo, abluero. Virg Ænead.* 2. *Procul hinc, procul esse prophani, conclamat vates, totoque abstinite luco,*

This is a trite Theam, and often inculcated, therefore I shall passe it: only let me advise you, when ever you go to Prayer (if your leisure will permit) to read first one or more Chapters in the Bible; and do not gallop over the Scripture when you read it, as the most doe; but pause a little at the end of every verse.

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verſe or ſentence, and whilſt you pauſe, [x] Pray; the Scripture as you read it, will put words into your mouth, and ſuggeſt meditations which are fit matter for Prayer unto your minds, though ſome parts of Scripture eſpecially the *Pſalmes*, are more apt for this purpoſe then others; and if any paſſage be obſcure, put a marke upon it, and propoſe it to the next able Miniſter, or Chriſtian thou meeteſt with to be reſolved; and for the preſent, pray in *Davids* language, or to that purpoſe, that [z] *God would open thine eyes to ſee and to underſtand the wondrous things of his Law.* idle and unprofitable diſcourſe. [z] *Pſal.* 119. 18.

[x] *Lectionem frequenter interrumpat oratio, & animum jugiter adhærentem Deo grata viciſſitudo ſanctæ operationis accendat Hieron. in Ep.*

[y] A good courſe to prevent

4. A fourth and further Help is this, to have right conceptions of God all along the Duty; to conceive of him as he is, and as he hath revealed himſelf in his Word to be. This will greatly conduce to the quickning of you. Conceive of him,

1. As of an Omnipreſent God; that he is really, though not viſibly preſent in all places, and in that place where thou art a Praying more particularly; that he ſees thy heart as plainly as thou canſt

canst see thine own hands, that he observeth thee as narrowly, as if thou only wert alive in all the world, or as if thou alone of all the children of men wert making thy supplication ro him. When ever thou setteſt about this duty, [a] set God before thine eyes (as *David* did) and represent him to thy self under this notion of an Omnipresent all-seeing God.

[a] How would you Pray if men were present to see and hear you? *Sic loquere cum Deo quasi Homines ad flavent. Seneca.*

2. Conceive of God as one that is full of Majesty, and Greatneſſe. That passage in *Mich. 6. 6.* (*Wherewithall shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God,*) doth intimate what apprehensions we should have of God, when we come into his presence, *viz.* that he is a High God, infinitely above any of his creatures; betwixt him and the Holy Angells, or the higheſt of the children of men, there is a wider difference then betwixt the Potter and his Clay. Oh how would this apprehenſion both quicken and awe us in Prayer.

3. Conceive of God as one that is exceeding gracious, and plenteous in mercy

mercy to all that call upon him. That known Scripture *Heb.* 11. 6. (*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him*) doth hint what conceptions we should have of God in Prayer, as of one that is exceeding bountifull: we must believe not only his being, but his bounty: he gives not only what we ask, but more, yea [b] abundantly more then we can ask. Oh what quickning and confidence doth this notion of God afford! To apprehend God in his greatnesse doth [c] stir up feare and godly reverence. To apprehend God in his goodnesse, doth stir up Faith and holy boldnesse. God who is our father, likes that we his children should come before him in this manner; he gives us leave (so we doe it awfully) to [d] speak all our minds to him. 'Tis said of *Phavius* the Emperour, that he would not that any man should present a petition to him (as if he were offering meat to a Lyon or Elephant) with a trembling hand: God likes that we with confidence as became one that spake to his Father or Friend.

[b] Eph. 3. 20. ὑπὲρ ὃν πάντων *Supra quam redundanter.*

[c] *Vitus Theod.* says of *Luther*, that he Prayed with such reverence as became one that spake to the great God, and

[d] Eph. 3. 12. παῤῥησία. *Propria est libertas dicendi, ex πᾶν omne, & ῥῆσις dictio.*

should

should lift up our hands to him, *as without wrath*, so *also* [c] *without doubting*.

[c] 1 Tim. 2. 8.

4. Conceive of God in Prayer as one God, [f] not divided, and yet distinguished into three Persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit. This is a great mystery, fitter for admiration, then humane conception; and yet all along this duty God must be thus apprehended, as one substance in three subsistances; as one essence in three relations: all which do concur to the Prayers of Believers, and have a different office about them; there is the Father hearing, the Son interceding, and the Spirit helping their infirmities.

[f] *Vid* Dr. *Hall Decad.* 3 *Ep.* 7.

Lastly conceive of God not [g] absolutely, but in Christ: God in himself is *a consuming fire*, but in Christ he is a mercifull Father. [h] *There is no coming to God but by him.* I might enlarge upon this head, but I forbear; only remember this, you will never pray to any purpose unlesse you carry along with you in your minds, a right notion, and con-

[g] *Luther* was wont to say, *Nolo Deum absolutum* Heb. 12. *ult*

[h] Heb. 7. 25. *Themistocl.* understanding that K. *Admettus* was angry with him took his young son in his armes, and treated with the father holding that his darling in his bosome, and thereby he appeased the Kings wrath.

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ception of that God to whom you pray,

5. Entertain and maintain very honorable thoughts of the Duty of Prayer it self: this will both move you to the Duty, and marvellously quicken you in it. What the [i] *Psalmist* says of the City of God, that may I say of the Duty of Prayer, *Great and glorious things are spoken of it.* If any should ask me as that King did the Prophets servant, [k] *What great things hath thy Master done?* So what great things hath Prayer done? it would require more lines, then I intend in all, to rerurn a full answer. I might easily write a large history of the great exploits that Prayer hath done in the world. You read *Heb.* 11. of many wonderfull effects of faith, the effects and fruits of Prayer are as many, and as great. It hath [l] *Obtained promises, subdued Kingdoms, turned to flight the armies of aliens; it hath raised the dead, stopt the Suns course, yea made it to go back. It hath opened prison doors, and unlockt such secrets as have puzzled the Divell himself; it hath disappointed the plots of adversaries, and tumbled those into the pit themselves*

[i] Ps. 87. 3.

[k] 1 Kin. 8. 4.

[l] Dan. 9. 2, 3, 4. Isa. 37. 15, 16, &c. Ion. 2. 1, 2, &c. Josh. 10. 12, 14. Act. 12. 5. Dan. 2. 18. 2 Sam. 15. 31. Est. 4. 16.

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which they have maliciously digged for others. What shall I say more? it hath [m] *opened Heaven, and shut it again.* These and such like memorable things have been brought to passe, by the Prayers of such sinfull and infirme creatures as we our selves are.

m Jam. 5. 17. 18. Ἠλίας ἀνθρωπος ὑπ ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν i. e. *iisdem affectionibus obnoxius.*

Let me add this, it hath laid hold on God himself; and put him (as one says) to a mercifull retreat, when he hath been marching in his anger against persons or people. *Jacob by Prayer* [n] *had power with God*, and by wrestling with him [o] wrested mercy from him. God speaks as if his hands were held and tyed up by Prayer; *Let me go*, saith he *to Jacob*; and to *Moses*, [p] *Let me alone*. [q] One observes that God in *Exod.* 32. 10. doth indent as it were with *Moses* and offer him composition, if he would hold his peace; *Let me alone* (saith he) *and I will make of thee a great people*; Wonderfull is that passage ([r] if we read it right) in *Isa.* 45. 11. there God sayes, *Concerning the works of my hands command ye me?*

n Hos. 12. 3.

o *Cælum tundimus & misericordiam extorquemus. Tertull.*

p *Aug* on Exod 32. 10. thus glosseth *Domine quis tenet te? &c.*

q Manton on James 5. 86.

r Some read it interrogatively thus, Concerning the works of my hands command ye me?

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mand ye me." These and the like expreſſions are to be admired (ſays the ſame Author) not ſtrained, leſt our thoughts degenerate into rude blaſphemy: certainly they are mighty condeſcenſions, wherein the Lord would ſignifie to us the great power and efficacy of Prayer.

I might bring many Scriptures and arguments to evince the prevalency of Prayer: but this is a common argument, and therefore I ſhall decline it. Only conſult *Mat.* 21. 22. where Chriſt ſays that *all things, whatſoever we aske in Prayer, believing, we ſhall receive.* This one promiſe is enough of it ſelf to quicken the deadeſt ſoul that is, in Prayer, and Chriſts manner of ſpeaking here, is obſervable; it had been (one would have thought) enough to have ſaid, All things ye ask in Prayer ye ſhall receive; but here he adds, all things *whatſoever.* It ſeems to be a tautology; we don't ſpeak in our ordinary diſcourſe, I will give you all things whatſoever you ask. But this is not without its ſignification; *All things* (ſayes one) is a promiſe of generals, and *whatſoever* relares to particulars. 'Tis as if he had ſaid, Not one-

['Tis Mr Burroughs] his gloſſe in one of his Books.

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ly all things in generall, but every perticular thing that you ask you shall receive; for though it be true, that generals include particulars, yet such is the unbeliefe of our hearts, that though we assent to promises in the generall, yet when it comes to particulars, we hold off, and fear they will not be made good to us. Hereto I might add that speech of Christ to the woman of *Canaan*; [t] *Be it unto thee as thou wilt*, he seemes to give her a blank, and bids her write down what she pleaseth.

But enough of this: My advice is, That you digest this notion well, and carry it along with you all the while you are at prayer, and it cannot but quicken you. As he must needs pray heartlesly, who thinks 'tis a bootless exercise, who is ready to say in his heart, *What profit is it that I pray unto God?* so he must necessarily [u] *pray in Prayer* as 'tis said *Elias* did, who thinks that Prayer, like *Jonathans* bow, doth [w] never return empty; but oftentimes as the Eccho doubleth the voice, so doth Gods answer our prayers. Rest assured of this, That every petition a believer puts up on Earth is read and fil'd

t It was said of *Luther*, *Iste vir apud Deum, potuit quod voluit.*

u Peruse that full Scripture 1 John 5. 14, 15.

u Προσευχῇ προσεύξατο. Jam. 5. 17.

w Εὐχῆς δικαίας οὐκ ἀνήκοος ὁ Θεός. *Menander.*

fil'd in Heaven: [x] 'Tis nigh God, and in his view night and day; he gives the thing desired, [y] or something that is better.

x So was Solomons, 1 K n 8.59. and so is every believers.

y *Nemo parvi pendat orationem suam, dico enim vobis, quod ipse ad quem oramus, non parvi pendit eam. Postquam egressa est ab ore nostro, ipse scribit eam in libro suo, & unum in duobus indubitanter expectemus, aut dabit quod petimus, aut quod novit utilius. Greg. in Hom. super Evang.*

6. Be much in the use of ejaculatory Prayer. Reader, if thou shouldst not understand the word, I will suppose thee acquainted with the thing: 'tis a short, yet serious lifting up thy soul in desires unto God, upon any occasion whatsoever. These ejaculatory Prayers are either vocal, or mental only. If you read the Scripture, [z] you shall find this way of praying very familiar with the best of men, yea with Christ himself.

z Gen. 43. 14. & 49. 18. Neh 2. 4 5. Judg. 16. 28. 2 Sam. 15. 31. Luke 23.42. Joh 12.26.27. Luke 26.21. & 23.34, 36. Q. if this be not intended by *David*, when he says, Psal. 119.164 *Seven times a day do I praise thee*

I could offer many things to commend it you; as thus.

1. 'Tis very acceptable to God: he hath testified his accepting by his answering such ejaculations as these. *David's* vocal ejaculation, *Turn (O Lord)*

I pray thee, the counsel of Achitophel *into foolishness.* And *Nehemiah's* mental ejaculation, *Neh.* 2. 4, 5. had present audience.

2. 'Tis very easily performed; all times and places are alike to it: whether you are alone, or in company, at home, or abroad, you may in this way make known your requests unto God.

3. 'Tis an excellent means to keep the heart always in a heavenly frame: It helps you also to improve every Ordinance and Providence of God.

But lastly, which makes to our purpose, 'tis of special use to dispose us for solemn and [a] continued Prayer. They that often in the day are thus lifting up their hearts to God, have them in tune when they betake themselves to that more solemn service. Praying thoughts and desires are with them in a readiness: these short breathings do prepare them for a longer race. They that are good (says one) at these running pulls

[a] *Vid.* Mr. *Gurnals* 3 Part of his Compleat Christian Armour, *p.* 387.

It was a speech of a dying Saint, that he was going to change his place, but not his company. A Christian that is frequent in these ejaculations, when he goes to pray more solemnly, he goes from God to God, from a more transient view of him to a more fixed *&c.*

and

and trips, must needs wrestle well with God. A candle that is just now put out, is soon lighted again: whilest the heart still glows, and is warm with these short ejaculations, 'tis readily kindled and quickned in solemn secret Prayer.

My advice is, That you would accustome your self to these holy Apostrophe's, to these heavenly ejaculations: And yet I would caution you against doing this in a customary way. Formality (if you have not a care) will fly-blow and corrupt this and every other good duty,

7. Another Help is this: Keep your heart close to the Duty, and suffer it not to stray or wander. A straying heart must needs be a straightned and a dead heart in Prayer. How can a Christian have a lively and enlarged heart in a Duty, when he hath no heart at all there? but that is [b] stragling in this and that corner of the earth: whilst he is speaking to God, his heart is conversing with the world, insomuch that he forgets many times in Prayer what he

[b] *Quasi nobis ipsi sermo cum homine vulgari inter orandum, omisso Deo, huc vel illuc transvolamus.* Calv. Instit. l. 4.

spake last. [c] Oh what an indignity is offered unto God, and how is he mockt by such praying as this! We would have him attend to our prayers, when we do not attend to them our selves.

[c] *Magnam injuriam Deo facio, cum precor ut meas preces exaudiat quas ego qui fundo non exaudio. Deprecor illum ut mihi intendat ego vero nec mihi nec illi intendo.*

Vain thoughts in Prayer are occasioned partly by the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of our own hearts; thence they do proceed as Christ shews, and that as freely as water from a fountain; and partly by the subtilty and malice of Satan; he being a Spirit hath ready access to thy spirit, and thou never goest aside to pray, but he follows thee at the heels; and seeing he cannot divert thee from, his desire is to distract thee in the duty. Sometimes he injects such thoughts as are directly sinfull, or if he finds that these affright thee (as many times a Christian starts at these as at some ghostly apparition) then he casts in such as are at other times allowable and lawfull; or if he sees that these are unwelcome, then he injects such thoughts as are in themselves good and usefull, onely they are impertinent: these he steals our of the heart again for the most part before the Prayer is ended: though at other times he would

oppose

oppose them, yet now he puts them forward, as those that are most likely to find entertainment in thy soul. I suppose thy experience will let thee set thy seal to this as true.

Now if thou wouldest have thy heart enlivened and enlarged in Prayer, remember to repel every vain or impertinent thought that comes in to thy disturbance: resist it; rise upon it; call in help from Heaven against it: This is one sence we are to put upon the Apostles [d] *watching unto Prayer.* If at other times, then much more in Prayer, we must keep our hearts with all keeping, or else, do what we can, they will give us the slip. [e] As you do with your Children, so you had need to do with your Childish minds; happily they go along with you to Church, but when you are set (if not awed by your eye) they steal forth, and are gone; and it may be are playing all Sermon time, or a good part of it, and you miss them not; To prevent this, you set them before you, and have an eye to them. You can apply it.

[d] Eph. 6. 18.

[e] 'Tis Mr. *Gurnals* comparison in *l.b. prædict.*

Remember this advice whenever you go to Prayer; renew your reso-

lution to watch against vain thoughts; think how many Prayers they have [f] marr'd already; resolve, that through grace, they shall not spoil this also.

8. Let the guilt of no one sin ly upon thy Conscience; that will so clog, disquiet, and check thy spirit in Prayer, that thou wilt never be able to proceed with any life or enlargement. Guilt makes a Christian shy of coming into the presence of God, as a faulty Child playes least in sight, and steals away to bed before the time, being loath to come where his Father is. So it is with a Christian, that is conscious to himself of any fault or sin that he hath knowingly committed against God; and as he is listless to come to Prayer, so he is lifeless in the duty; his sin flies in his face, so that he cannot lift it up with any [g] confidence: his heart upbraids him, and falls a quarrelling with him, and says, What hast thou to do to take Gods Name into thy mouth, *&c* ? If therefore thou wouldest pray as thou desirest, preserve thy Conscience pure and peaceable: Take heed of known sins; [h] *of departing wilfully or wickedly* (as *Davids* phrase

[f] *Si vagetur mens nostra nullam e precibus utilitatem percipimus, imo potius maximam damnationem. Vet. Mart.*

[g] *Tunc cor fiduciam in oratione accipit quum sibi vitæ nulla pravitas contradicit. Greg. in mor.*

[h] Psal. 18. 21.

phrase is) from God. There is [i] a sinning weakly, or through weakness; this doth not ordinarily interrupt a Christians peace; and there is a sinning wickedly, or through wickedness; (so [k] *Jude* speaks of committing ungodly deeds ungodlily) this lays waste the Conscience; this destroys a Christians peace, and deadens his heart in duty; Oh beware of sinning after this manner! if thou must abstain from every appearance of evil, then much more from every apparent evil! Oh fly from it when it comes near thee in a temptation, as thou wouldest do from a venemous Serpent; shake it off as thou wouldest do an ugly Toad that is crawling up upon thee: Observe [l] *Eliphaz* his advice to *Job*, which is, *to put iniquity far from him*; not to come near it; and then says he, *thou shalt lift up thy face to God, and make thy prayer unto him*: Thou shalt make many and mighty Prayers; (as the [m] word there signifies) thou shalt not onely use words in Prayer, but words cloathed with power; thou shalt be able to pray, and to pour strong Prayers in abundance unto God.

[i] *Peccata quotidianæ incursionis, & vastantia conscientiam.*

[k] Jude 15.

[l] Job 23. 22. with 26 27.

[m] עתר *multiplicavit, proprie verba fortia in oratione cum multa copia fudit*

Queſt. But if ſin hath already wounded my Conſcience, and broken my Peace; am I now to refrain Prayer till it be healed again?

Anſ. No: for this is not to mend the matter, but to make it worſe. You cannot heal the wound of one ſin by another: you muſt to Chriſt by Faith, and to God by Prayer; and though there be a preſent deadneſs, yet ply the Throne of Grace, till the Lord ſpeak peace to thy ſoul: and remember to do this preſently; the ſooner, the better; let not the Sun go down upon the breach betwixt God and thee: New breaches, are made up better then long quarrels; and green wounds are healed eaſier than old ſores.

9. It will not a little help in this caſe, if you are provided beforehand both with matter, and a method in Prayer. I obſerve that Chriſtians are ſtreightned in this duty, not onely from the naughtineſs of their hearts, but from the emptineſs of their heads; as ſometimes (like *Zebedees* Children) they ask they know not what; ſo at other times they know not what to ask: They are often word-bound, (if I may

ſo

so speak) and at a loss; they cannot tell how to go forwards, and therefore they go backwards, and vent themselves in vain repetitions. Now this great evil will be in part prevented, if they be stor'd beforehand with matter for Prayer, and if they do observe a method in the duty.

Possibly upon the first reading of this direction, you may reject it, as that which shuts out the immediate suggestions of the Spirit, and tends to formality; but weigh it well, and you will be of another mind: Take it upon the word of one that hath prov'd it; it is of admirable use to quicken and enlarge the heart in Prayer; because from hence there is a continual supply of fresh matter, for want of which (your experience tells you, that) you are exceedingly dulled and straightned. Tis true, sometimes (and oh that it were so always!) we have such abundant assistance, such ravishing incomes from the Spirit of God, that we stand in no need of any such help as this here offer'd; our spirits are so raised, our affections are so up, we are carryed out so beyond our selves,

ſelves, that we cannot be bounded by any premeditated matter or method; but our hearts are not always like the Chariots of *Aminadab*, but too often like the Chariots of *Pharaoh*; we drive on, but heavily, for the moſt part, in this duty; and at ſuch times this direction may have its uſe.

In order to ſtoring our ſelves with matter and method for Prayer, it would not be amiſs, if you had heads, and common places in your mind, (or rather in writing) to which you might refer ſuch Scriptures and conſiderations, as do occurr in meditation by your ſelves, in conference with others, in reading or hearing the Word of God. Hitherto alſo you might refer the ſins you have committed, the mercies you have received, the wants you would have ſupplied, the luſts you would have ſubdued, *&c.* It ſhould be ſome part of every days work to collect fit matter for Prayer: This is another way of watching thereunto; what Miniſters do to fit themſelves for Preaching, that all Chriſtians ſhould do to fit themſelves for Praying. They put all things they meet with (which may

may be of use) under their proper heads, in books which they have for that purpose, that they may readily have recourse thereto, whenever they have occasion. And so your collections must not be set down confusedly, but methodically, and in order; else you will be to seek when you should make use thereof.

It would do well also if Christians would observe a method in their Prayers throughout; this is of singular use to those who pray with others; because confused repetitions, and disorderly digressions, cannot but dislike and deaden those that joyn with them; and it is not altogether useless in secret Prayer; for now a man can never be at a stand, but still there will be an orderly succession of matter which serves greatly to quicken and excite the heart and affections, as I have already hinted. [n] The Lords Prayer, which is the standard

[n] Dr. *Gouge* his guide to go to God. *Lambertus Danæus de oratione dominicâ, &c.* Consult Dr. *Wilkins* his discourse concerning the Gift of Prayer; there you will meet with an exact method to be observed in Prayer. Prayer by him is divided into two parts: 1. Less principal, *viz.* A Preface, apt transitions, and the conclusion. 2. More principal: 1. Confession, 2. Petition, 3. Thanksgiving. There you will find also scheams of these three more principal parts of Prayer.

dard, or ſtanding pattern of Prayer, is very excellent (as many have obſerv'd) for method as well as matter; and hereby doubtleſs Chriſt would intimate to us, that the one is uſefull as well as the other.

Obj. You'l ſay, This advice cannot be put in practiſe without great pains and care, and to me there ſeems no ſuch need of it; for doubtleſs God is not taken with method or words in Prayer, his eye is upon the heart, and he obſerves its motion more then the motion of the tongue.

Anſw. This is moſt true; and therefore it is not propounded as that which will affect or take with God, but as a means to quicken and enlarge our ſelves. And yet I muſt tell you too, that though the words we ſpeak and the method we uſe do not affect God; yet to beſpeak him in a confuſed, careleſs, empty manner, cannot but offend him. I am ſure it is very unbecoming the ſolemnity of the Duty, and contrary to that reverence we owe unto the Divine Majeſty. He that requires us to take heed how we hear when he ſpeaks to us, doth look that we ſhould take as

great

o great heed what we say when we speak unto him. Weigh *Solomons* caution *Eccl.* 5. 2. *Let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before the Lord.* 'Tis you know the tongues office to utter, and the heart's is to conceive, why is it then said, *Let not thy heart be hasty to utter?* Because the heart should not suffer the tongue to utter what it had not first conceived and concocted. The reason of this caution is taken from the consideration of that infinite distance betwixt God and us: He is an *High and holy God that inhabiteth Eternity*, and thou (as P *Bernard* expresseth it) a vile Toad creeping and crawling out of its ditch; *He is in heaven, and thou upon the earth, therefore thy words should be few.* Why should our words be few? what! is God against long Praying? No, surely, he is not tyred with the length, nor taken with the shortness of our Prayers; but the reason of the clause is this, Because they who speak but little, do ponder what they say. Our tongues when we speak to men (much less when we speak to God) should not run before our wit. We *should choose out words to reason with*

o *Nescit pœnitenda loqui qui proferenda prius suo tradidit examini. Cassiodor. l. 10 ep. 4.*

P *E palude suâ procedens, & repens vilis ranuncula.*

God

q Job 9. 14. God (as q Job ſpeaks.) As we muſt beware of curioſity, ſo alſo of careleſſneſs in thoſe words which we utter before God in Prayer. God ponders our words, and therefore we have reaſon to do it our ſelves.

10. The tenth Direction ſhall conſiſt of three or four particulars, which are prudential onely, and may ſeem (till prov'd) little profitable.

1. Chooſe and uſe that geſture of body which may ſerve beſt to quicken and excite thy Spirit in this ſervice. And here I muſt premiſe, that there is no bodily geſture in ſecret Prayer commanded by God, he hath left that to the prudence and piety of his people: therefore if you read the Scripture, you ſhall find the Saints of God to have uſed all the poſtures of the body in this duty: indeed, Kneeling hath been moſt in practice, that is a poſture of great reverence, and it is put r ſometimes for the duty of Prayer it ſelf: not that it is

r Pſal. 95. 6. Eph. 3. 14. *A ſigno rem denotat, non quod oratio ſemper requirat genuflexionem, ſed quoniam hoc reverentiæ ſignum communiter adhibetur præſertim ubi non perfunctoria eſt ſed ſeria oratio. Cal. in locum.*

eſſential

essential to it, for you shall see the people of God in other postures at Prayer; sometimes you read of their [r] prostrating themselves, or lying with their faces upon the ground; sometimes again you read of their [t] sitting; sometimes of their [u] standing, and sometimes of their [w] walking. This last gesture, though least in use, yet some have found it usefull. Kneeling doth often dispose to sleep and drowsiness, which standing or walking doth prevent: and surely that gesture is most eligible, which is found most effectual to keep off indisposition, or to dispose and fit a person for duty.

[r] Mat. 26. 39. Josh. 7. 6. 2 Sam. 12. 16. [t] 2 Sam. 7. 18. [u] 1 Kin. 8. 22. 2 Chron. 20. 9. [w] Gen. 24. 63. Heb. שיח which signifies, as to meditate, so to pray. *Vid. Chald.* and *Genev. Translat.* and *Tremell.*

Nay, my opinion is, that variety of gestures, may be both lawfull and usefull at sometimes in this exercise. Surely Christians may take that liberty when alone, which would be unseemly in the presence of others: They may now kneel, and anon stand, and then walk; and so turn from one gesture to another, as they find it will be more helpfull to them for the end already men-

uc. .6 & 2. & 41. tt. 14.

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mentioned. Yea, I doubt not, but in case of great straitness upon their spirits, they may make a stand or pause, till they have by meditation recovered some new matter to continue the Duty: They may turn from Prayer to Reading, and from Reading again to Prayer; from Prayer to Meditation, and from Meditation again to Prayer, as they see good. *Jerome* doth somewhere relate, how that finding himself sluggish and dead in Prayer, he left speaking to God, and fell a speaking to his own heart: "Think, O my soul, (says he) "did *Daniel* thus pray when he was "in the Lions den? or *Jonah* when he "was in the Whales belly? Did the "penitent Thief thus pray when he "was upon the Cross? *&c.* And then he tells us that he went to Prayer afresh, when he had first roused up himself by these and such like considerations.

2. Choose such a place to pray in as is most convenient for this Duty. Find out such a place (if thou canst) where thou mayest not be disturbed by any noise in thine ears, nor be diverted by any object before thine eyes. *When thou*

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thou prayest (says Christ) *enter into thy Closet.* This counsel of Christ doth intimate, That Christians when they pray should have respect to the place in which they pray; the more close the more convenient. He adviseth further, *to shut the door:* lest the wind of Vain-glory should come in thereat. Our secret seeking of God should not be open or visible to any else but God. 'Tis true, when *Daniel* prayed, *he set his window open*, but it was to shew his Faith (as one observes) not his pride.

Some may say, This Rule does not reach us; we have no variety of places to retire into; poor people and servants, and such like, will be ready to say, as it is in the Proverb, We have *Hobsons* choice.

But to such I would reply, Is there no garden, nor grove, nor field, near you, into which you may with-draw? Why cannot you with *Isaac*, go forth at even-tide, or in the morning to meditate and to pray? × Read what Christ did, *Mark.* 1. 35. and surely tis record-ed for our imitation, tis said, *That in the morning a great while before day he arose*

× *V.* Luc. 5. 16 & 6. 12. & 22. 41. Matt. 14, 23.

aroſe and departed into a ſolitary place to pray.

3 It may conduce to the quickning of thee to uſe thy voice in ſecret Prayer. Not that God is taken with words, a few ſincere ſighs from the heart do more affect him then the moſt Rhetoricall expreſſions of the tongue. But though words do not move God in Prayer, yet experience teacheth, they ſometime move him that prayes. The Church ſays in the Lamentations, that her eye did affect her heart: the ſame can many a Chriſtian ſay of his tongue; that it ſerves to affect and quicken his heart in this duty.

y *Verbis opus eſt inter orandum ad excitandos nos alioquin Deus verbis non indiget.* Aretius.

Vox interdum non abſque fructu adhibetur quoniam in precibus nonnunquam langueſcimus, & animus ipſe defatigatur; unde vox interpoſita nos excitat, & quodammodo reficit. Pet. Mart. loci communes. Claſ. 3. cap. 13.

Here I had need to give this caution; That as Chriſtians ſhould not pray to be ſeen of men, ſo they ſhould not ſpeak in Prayer to be heard of men: If ſuch are not Hypocrites, yet they will hardly eſcape the cenſure of Hypocriſie.

Theſe ten are the principal helps and directions (according to the knowledg

ledge and experience that I have) for the lively performance of this great duty of ſecret Prayer: I might offer more, but that I have already exceeded the ordinary limits of a Letter. Onely remember this, to be thorowly ſenſible of thoſe things for which thou makeſt thy prayer unto God. This alone may quicken thee. How affectionately do they ask an almes, who ſee they muſt ſtarve without it? Deadneſs in Prayer ariſeth from want of a deep ſence of thy wants.

Remember alſo to ſet their examples before your eyes, who have performed this duty with life, enlargement, and importunity. Think you ſaw *Jacob* [z] *wreſtling with God, and putting forth all his ſtrength in Prayer.* Think you ſaw *Elias* praying earneſtly, and [a] *putting his face between his knees.* Imagine you ſaw Chriſt groveling upon the ground in the garden, [b] *offering up ſupplications, with ſtrong cryes and tears*; repeating that requeſt again and again, [c] *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*: Call to mind the poor Widdows importunity or impudency, (as the word ſignifies) who would

[z] Gen. 32. 24. Hoſ. 12. 3.
[a] 1 King 18. 42.
[b] Heb. 5. 7.
[c] Mat. 26. 34.

would have no nay. [d] Examples ſway with us more ſometimes, then any rules or precepts.

[d] *Magis ducimur exemplis quam præceptis.*

If none of all this will help thee, then fall down before God, bewailing thy deadneſs, confeſſing thy ſluggiſhneſs: ſay (as they in *Iſaiah*) [e] *I have not call'd upon God, nor ſtirred up my ſelf to take hold of him.* O how like a dead Dog am I before the Lord! Will the living God accept of ſuch dead duties as mine are? On how juſtly may God be angry with, and ſhut out my Prayers! [f] by my coldneſs in asking, I even prompt God to deny me.

[e] Iſa. 64. 7.

[f] *Qui fride rogat docet negare.*

Yea, not onely bemoan, but chide thy ſelf: ſay, Why art thou ſo dead O my Soul, and why art thou ſo ſottiſh within me? Rowſe up thy ſelf [g] as *Deborah* did: Say, *Awake, awake, O my ſoul, awake, awake:* Beſpeak thy ſelf, as the Shipmaſter did the Prophet *Jonah*; [h] *What meaneſt thou?* O ſluggard, *ariſe, call upon thy God.*

[g] Judg. 5. 12.

[h] Jonah. 1. 6.

Laſtly, Lift up ſtrong cryes (mingled with tears, if thou canſt) unto God, that he would lend his helping hand, as *David* did, *Pſal.* 80. 18. *Quicken me,*

me, O Lord, to call upon thy Name. Send thy quickning Spirit unto my heart. How [i] oft doth *David* make this requeſt in the 119 Pſalm? ever now and then this requeſt comes in; *Quicken me, O Lord: Quicken me according to thy Word: Quicken me according to thy righteouſneſs: Quicken me for thy names ſake*, &c. 'Tis not a vain repetition, but a plain manifeſtation, both of his great need, and of his earneſt deſire of this bleſſing.

[i] Ten times

Thus you ſee how large a Letter I have written to you with mine own hand: If by theſe hints you are any way helped to pray, you are the more obliged to remember him in your Prayers,

who is

Yours in any Chriſtian Office

R. M.

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All written by *George Swinnock* M. A. late of *Great Kimbol* in *Buckingham-shire*.